

Appl. No.: 10/749,762
Amdt. dated 11/19/2007
Reply to Office Action of June 19, 2007

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus for sealing at least two surfaces, comprising:
 - a sealing member having an attachment portion fixed to one of the surfaces, said sealing member also including a seal portion connected to said attachment portion, wherein the seal portion comprises a deformable segment that faces the surfaces, wherein the deformable segment is made of an elastomer sponge material;
 - a receiving aperture defined by at least one of the surfaces, wherein said receiving aperture is adapted to receive and retain the deformable segment of the seal portion of said sealing member; and
 - a coating disposed on said sealing member and the at least two surfaces, said coating extending continuously across said sealing member and at least one of the surfaces; and
 - a filler disposed within and filling an area in the receiving aperture, between the deformable segment and the surface to which the sealing member is fixed,
wherein the deformable segment is positioned fully within the receiving aperture.
2. (Previously presented) An apparatus for sealing at least two surfaces, comprising:
 - a sealing member having an attachment portion fixed to one of the surfaces, said sealing member also including a seal portion connected to said attachment portion, wherein the seal portion comprises a deformable segment that faces the surfaces;
 - a receiving aperture defined by at least one of the surfaces, wherein said receiving aperture is adapted to receive and retain the deformable segment of the seal portion of said sealing member; and
 - a coating disposed on said sealing member and the at least two surfaces, said coating extending continuously across all of that portion of said sealing member that faces away from the surfaces and at least one of the surfaces such that no portion of said sealing member is exposed through the coating, wherein said coating defines a splice coincident with a distal end of said sealing member, thereby separating said coating that is disposed on said sealing member and one of the surfaces from said coating that is disposed on the other surface.

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3. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said sealing member is at least partially made of a pliable material, such that the seal portion of said sealing member bends relative to the attachment portion of said sealing member.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the attachment portion of said sealing member is made of a material that is less pliable than the seal portion.

6. (Currently amended) ~~The An apparatus according to claim 1 for sealing at least two surfaces, further comprising:~~

a sealing member having an attachment portion fixed to one of the surfaces, said sealing member also including a seal portion connected to said attachment portion, wherein the seal portion comprises a deformable segment that faces the surfaces;

a rivet extending through the attachment portion of said sealing member and one of the surfaces to fix said sealing member to one of the surfaces;

a receiving aperture defined by at least one of the surfaces, wherein said receiving aperture is adapted to receive and retain the deformable segment of the seal portion of said sealing member;

a coating disposed on said sealing member and the at least two surfaces, said coating extending continuously across said sealing member and at least one of the surfaces; and

a filler disposed within and filling an area in the receiving aperture, between the deformable segment and the surface to which the sealing member is fixed,

wherein the deformable segment is positioned fully within the receiving aperture.

7. (Currently amended) ~~The An apparatus according to claim 1 for sealing at least two surfaces, further comprising:~~

a sealing member having an attachment portion fixed to one of the surfaces, said sealing member also including a seal portion connected to said attachment portion, wherein the seal portion comprises a deformable segment that faces the surfaces;

a receiving aperture defined by at least one of the surfaces, wherein said receiving aperture is adapted to receive and retain the deformable segment of the seal portion of said sealing member;

at least one engagement member extending from at least one of the surfaces to further define said receiving aperture, wherein said at least one engagement member is capable of receiving the deformable segment of said sealing member;

a coating disposed on said sealing member and the at least two surfaces, said coating extending continuously across said sealing member and at least one of the surfaces; and

a filler disposed within and filling an area in the receiving aperture, between the deformable segment and the surface to which the sealing member is fixed,

wherein the deformable segment is positioned fully within the receiving aperture.

8. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said sealing member defines an opening, and wherein the apparatus further comprises a fastener aligned with the opening in said sealing member and underlying a portion of the deformable segment of said sealing member, such that the deformable segment is disengaged from said receiving aperture when said fastener is at least partially loosened.

9. (Previously presented) An apparatus for sealing at least two surfaces, comprising:

a sealing member having an attachment portion fixed to one of the surfaces, said sealing member also including a seal portion connected to said attachment portion, wherein the seal portion comprises a deformable segment that faces the surfaces, wherein said sealing member is capable of being positioned such that the deformable segment is inserted into a receiving aperture defined between the at least two surfaces, and wherein said sealing member defines an opening; and

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a fastener aligned with the opening in said sealing member and underlying a portion of the deformable segment of said sealing member, such that the deformable segment is disengaged from said receiving aperture when said fastener is at least partially loosened.

10. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising at least one coating on a side of said sealing member opposite the surfaces.

11. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said sealing member is at least partially made of a pliable material, such that the seal portion of said sealing member bends relative to the attachment portion of said sealing member.

12. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the deformable segment of said sealing member is made of an elastomer sponge material.

13. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the attachment end of said sealing member is made of a material that is less pliable than the seal portion.

14. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising a rivet extending through the attachment portion of said sealing member and one of the surfaces to fix said sealing member to one of the surfaces.

Claims 15-24 (Canceled).

25. (Previously presented) A method of sealing at least two surfaces with a sealing member having an attachment portion and a seal portion, comprising:

fixing the attachment portion of the sealing member to one of the surfaces;

positioning a deformable segment carried by the seal portion of the sealing member within a receiving aperture defined by at least one of the surfaces, wherein positioning the

deformable segment comprises placing the deformable segment fully within the receiving aperture;

filling an area in the receiving aperture, between the deformable segment and the surface to which the sealing member is fixed, with a filler, following positioning of the deformable segment within the receiving aperture; and

applying a coating on the sealing member and the at least two surfaces such that the coating extends continuously across the sealing member and at least one of the surfaces.

26. (Previously presented) A method of sealing at least two surfaces with a sealing member having an attachment portion and a seal portion, comprising:

fixing the attachment portion of the sealing member to one of the surfaces;

positioning a deformable segment carried by the seal portion of the sealing member within a receiving aperture defined by at least one of the surfaces; and

applying a coating on the sealing member and the at least two surfaces such that the coating extends continuously across all of that portion of the sealing member that faces away from the surfaces and at least one of the surfaces such that no portion of said sealing member is exposed through the coating, wherein applying the coating comprises defining a splice in the coating coincident with a distal end of the sealing member, thereby separating the coating that is disposed on the sealing member and one of the surfaces from the coating that is disposed on the other surface.

27. (Original) The method according to claim 25, further comprising applying a release material on at least a portion of a side of the sealing member facing the surfaces prior to positioning the deformable segment within the receiving aperture, to facilitate removal of the sealing member and release of the deformable segment from the receiving aperture.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Original) The method according to claim 25, further comprising installing a fastener in an aligned relationship with a portion of the deformable segment prior to positioning of the deformable segment within the receiving aperture.

30. (Original) The method according to claim 29, further comprising accessing the fastener via an opening defined by the sealing member, wherein accessing the fastener comprises at least partially loosening the fastener and disengaging the deformable segment from the receiving aperture.

31. (Previously presented) A method of sealing at least two surfaces with a sealing member having an attachment portion and a seal portion and defining an opening therethrough, comprising:

fixing the attachment portion of the sealing member to one of the surfaces;

positioning a deformable segment carried by the seal portion of the sealing member within a receiving aperture defined by at least one of the surfaces so as to overlie a fastener, wherein positioning the deformable segment comprises positioning the sealing member such that the fastener is aligned with the opening defined by the sealing member; and

accessing the fastener via the opening defined by the sealing member, wherein accessing the fastener comprises at least partially loosening the fastener and disengaging the deformable segment from the receiving aperture.

32. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 31, further comprising installing the fastener in an aligned relationship with a portion of the deformable segment prior to positioning of the deformable segment within the receiving aperture.

33. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 31, further comprising applying a coating on the sealing member and the at least two surfaces such that the coating extends continuously across the sealing member and at least one of the surfaces.

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34. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 33, wherein applying the coating comprises defining a splice in the coating coincident with a distal end of the sealing member, thereby separating the coating that is disposed on the sealing member and one of the surfaces from the coating that is disposed on the other surface.

35. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 31, further comprising applying a release material on at least a portion of a side of the sealing member facing the surfaces prior to positioning the deformable segment within the receiving aperture, to facilitate removal of the sealing member and release of the deformable segment from the receiving aperture.

36. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 31, further comprising filling an area in the receiving aperture, between the deformable segment and the surface to which the sealing member is fixed, with a filler, following positioning of the deformable segment within the receiving aperture.